

The Light is ON for You

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Why Go To Confession?

God loves each of us. We have been created by God and placed in this world to know, love, and serve Him. Unfortunately, we do not always show our love for God in our words and actions. There are times when we turn away from God. These moments when we chose to do wrong or avoid what is good are sins. The good news is that God has given us a way to turn back to Him with our whole heart. He has given us the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

What is the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

One of the seven outward signs of grace instituted by Christ and given to the Church; this Sacrament of Healing provides an opportunity for a person to receive God's forgiveness, pardon for their sins, and reconciliation with God and His Church.

Sometimes people say the Sacrament of Reconciliation, other times the Sacrament of Penance, and still other times they say they are going to Confession. Which name is correct?

All of these names are correct. Confession, penance, and reconciliation are all aspects of the sacrament. Confession is when we tell our sins to the priest. Penance is the action that the priest gives us to do or say to express our gratitude for God's forgiveness. Finally, we experience reconciliation when the priest absolves us of our sins, which repairs our relationship with God and the Church. Because reconciliation is the fruit of the sacrament, this is the name the Church prefers for the sacrament.

Why should I go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation and confess my sins to a priest? Can't I ask God for forgiveness on my own?

Asking for forgiveness is an important first step in repairing our relationship with God and others. However, sin damages not only your relationship with God but also your relationship with others and the Church. The priest hearing your confession acts as Christ present to you, offering God's mercy and forgiveness. In this way, the priest carries on the healing ministry that Jesus entrusted to his apostles when he shared with them his power to forgive sins (John 20:23).

Will the priest tell anyone about the sins I have confessed?

No, the priest cannot and will not tell anyone about anything you said during your confession. In fact, the Church requires that the priest keep secret anything you confess to him.

What if I am embarrassed to tell the priest my sins?

Feeling guilt or embarrassment about your sins is normal. It is also a sign that your conscience is letting you know that you have done something wrong. The priest is there to listen to you with the heart of Jesus. Jesus came to love and forgive and never seeks to embarrass us.

Will the priest be embarrassed by what I tell him?

Priests have heard many sins confessed to them and are prepared to offer spiritual counsel and absolution. Remember that priests are human and strive to avoid sin like everyone else - they regularly go to confession themselves. The priest will listen to you with understanding, not embarrassment or judgment.

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How can I prepare to participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

Examine your conscience. Think about both the times that you have intentionally done something wrong and the times that you chose not to do something for the good of another person. The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17) and the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12) are helpful tools for examining your conscience.

What if I don't remember how to go to confession?

Going to Reconciliation may be face-to-face or anonymous, with a screen between you and the priest. Choose the option that is most comfortable for you. Here are the steps:

1. The priest gives a blessing or greeting.
2. Make the Sign of the Cross and say, "Bless me father, for I have sinned. My last confession was..." (give weeks, months, or years).
3. Confess all your sins to the priest. (If you are unsure or uneasy, tell him and ask for help.)
4. Say, "I am sorry for these and all my sins."
5. The priest gives a penance and offers advice to help you become a better Catholic Christian.
6. Say an Act of Contrition, expressing your sorrow for your sins.
7. The priest, acting in the person of Christ, then absolves you from your sins.

"Go in peace"

As you consider this beautiful gift of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, reflect on these words of absolution offered by the priest and realize the great love and mercy that awaits you.

God the Father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of his Son, has reconciled the world to himself, and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins; through the ministry of the Church may God give you pardon and peace, and I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.